



Roger S. Duff, September 1977

(Photograph by F. E. McGregor)

Roger Shepherd Duff, M.A.,
D.Sc., F.R.S.N.Z., C.B.E.:
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DR. Roger Duff, who died suddenly in the Canterbury Museum on October 30, 1978, was born in Invercargill in 1912. He was educated at Christchurch Boys High School and at the Universities of Otago and Canterbury, where he took his M.A. degree in education. He was then employed as a clerk in a government office in Samoa for a while, but returned to New Zealand in 1938 to take up the position of ethnologist at the Canterbury Museum. In 1948 he was appointed Director of the Museum, and in 1952 was awarded a doctorate for his work on the Moa-hunter period of Maori culture.

Roger Duff will be best remembered for his work in describing the material culture of the early inhabitants of New Zealand, for his theories on Polynesian origins, and above all for his dedication to the Canterbury Museum and to the museum movement as a whole. He was instrumental in having a new wing built on to the 100-year-old Canterbury Museum in 1977, the main feature of which is a hall dealing with the natural history and the exploration of Antarctica.

During the 1940s, he excavated a series of 600-year-old Moa-hunter burials at Wairau Bar in the northeast of the South Island, and used the artifacts from this site as the basis for his comparative studies with those from other sites in New Zealand and throughout Oceania.

The differences between the shape and style of adze heads and of personal ornaments from early sites such as Wairau Bar on one hand, and those from later New Zealand sites on the other, allowed him to define the Moa-hunter period of native culture in more detail and with greater reliability than had previously been possible. Similarities in the morphology of adze heads (and to a lesser extent certain other artifacts) provided for him evidence that the ancestors of the New Zealand

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Maoris had come from Tahiti, and that the Polynesians in turn had come from Southeast Asia.

Besides Wairau Bar, Duff carried out excavations at a number of other archaeological sites in New Zealand, and also in Rarotonga (the first work of this nature to be done in the Cook Islands).